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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0227  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHBL/AMCONSUL BELFAST IMMEDIATE 1076

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBLIN 000412

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EI](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: IRISH LISBON TREATY REFERENDUM: "YES" VOTE LIKELY

REF: A. DUBLIN 397

[B](#). DUBLIN 383

[C](#). DUBLIN 362

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Classified By: DCM Robert J. Faucher. Reasons 1.4(b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Today, October 2, the Irish will vote in the long-awaited second referendum on the EU Lisbon Treaty. The polls throughout September, while fluctuating, have all given the "yes" side a large advantage, with the most recent poll, published on September 27, showing 55 percent for "yes," 27 percent for "no," and 18 percent undecided. The campaign has saturated the country, and the treaty has been debated, discussed and dissected in all of the media, on the streets, and wherever people gather. A split remains between the largely pro-Lisbon elites and working-class voters, who are more reticent. Also, despite the din, the percentage of undecided voters remains high. Two other large questions are whether more voters than expected will vote "no" because of the government's unpopularity (ref C), and whether high or low turnout will affect the outcome. With those caveats, we believe today's result will be "yes." END SUMMARY.

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OFFICIAL RESULTS TOMORROW EVENING  
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[1](#)2. (U) The polling stations opened today, October 2, at 7:00a.m., and will be open until 10:00p.m. The count will begin at 9:00a.m., tomorrow, October 3. The result should be evident by about noon on October 3, but the official result will not be known until the evening of October 3 or later.

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THE DIVIDE BETWEEN ELITES AND THE REST  
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[1](#)3. (C) One persistently noticeable divide throughout the campaign has been between elites and the rest. The elites are decidedly pro-Lisbon with other groups much less so. A poll published on September 25, which split results according to income groups, showed 62 percent of the top two income groups on the "yes" side but only 33 percent in favor of Lisbon in the bottom two income groups. Both groups had high percentages of undecided voters, 20 and 19 percent respectively. This largely tracks with what our contacts have told us (reftels), who have often lamented the person-on-the-street's lack of enthusiasm for Lisbon and the EU. This divide was part of the reason for the "no" vote in the first referendum in June 2008, in which results showed noticeably more support for Lisbon in higher-income constituencies than in lower-income and many rural areas. Our contacts, especially members of Parliament who have been canvassing for a "yes" vote, though, report almost unanimously that sentiment is turning in favor of a "yes" vote even in lower-income areas. Nevertheless, they say, lower-income voters are motivated not by enthusiasm for

Lisbon, but by concern that a "no" vote would isolate Ireland economically. This corresponds to our informal impressions. Emboffs have talked informally about Lisbon with numerous taxi drivers and others. The great majority of these informal interlocutors have said they would vote "yes" for economic reasons. Typical was one taxi driver who told poloff he had voted "no" in 2008, and still did not understand Lisbon very well, but would probably vote "yes" this time because he was unsure whether a "no" vote would further hurt Ireland's economy.

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SPOILERS: UNPOPULAR GOVERNMENT OR TURNOUT?  
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14. (C) Most of our contacts tell us that the most likely motivator for a "no" vote is the unpopular government (reftels). For that reason, politicians and pundits have been stressing incessantly that the Lisbon vote is not about the government, but about Ireland's place in Europe. Our contacts tell us that most people that they have talked to appear to be making that distinction. This corresponds to our own impressions from informal conversations with voters. Turnout could also skew the results. Our impression, however, is that turnout is unlikely to be a significant determining factor in favor of either side. Unlike in June 2008 (in which turnout was an unexpectedly high 53 percent), there are few signs that one side is more likely to get out the vote than the other.

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COMMENT: "YES" IT IS  
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15. (C) All signs -- especially the strong desire to avoid

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isolation from the EU in bad economic times -- point to a "yes" vote. A large number of the many voters who have remained undecided throughout the campaign might well vote "no," making the result considerably closer than polls predict. Looking beyond the referendum, the reticence of undecided and lower-income voters shows that the distance and opacity of the EU -- and the disconnect between the Irish government and the Irish electorate -- remain salient issues.

END COMMENT.  
ROONEY